

A Guide



to

WORKING

with the

media

CORPORATION

FOR NATIONAL
AND
COMMUNITY

 SERVICE

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Introduction

National service is not about what's happening in Washington – it's about what's going on in communities like yours. The Corporation for National Service wants to help you spread the news of your program's challenges and accomplishments – and of the dedicated work of your national service members.

**More than
70 percent of
Americans have
heard about
national service
programs through
the media,
according to a
national survey.**

Every time you tell someone about your program, you are engaging in public relations. Publicity is simply a means of telling people what you want them to know. You want your audience to know the purpose of the program, who's involved, how it operates, and why it's important to your community. Rather than sharing this information with one person or a small group, the media can take your message to thousands of people instantly.

Effective relations with the media can greatly enhance the impact of your project. Getting your story out through the media can help you:

- recruit national service members and sponsors;
- reach potential funding sources;
- educate the public about your projects; and
- highlight service members and activities that are getting things done in your community.

Reaching the news media starts with doing some homework and planning a strategy. When making decisions about media outreach, remember that you've got a lot of competition. Many organizations try to get their stories and events covered at the same time. Understanding the media is the crucial first step to success.

This manual is intended to assist you in working with the media to promote your program. While the Corporation's Office of Public Affairs doesn't have the resources to provide media and public relations support for the thousands of programs in the national service network, Public Affairs can offer guidance, support, information, and coordination of messages so programs can communicate effectively. Please call (202) 606-5000 with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

What is News?

You probably know much more about news than you realize. Just think about what draws you to a story when scanning the front page or listening to the evening news. Print and broadcast media outlets generally have three goals — to inform, to advise, and to entertain. The easier you make it for the media to attain these goals, the more likely you are to receive media coverage.

Several characteristics make information newsworthy. Reporters and editors respond best to timely news stories and ideas that include:

- Local interest. You always have a better chance of making the news if your story is based in the community, centered on a local program or individual.
- Widespread appeal. Stories that involve a topic currently in the news, or a common human characteristic (courage, triumph over adversity, etc.) shown in a new way.
- Well-known people. Recognizable names attract media attention.
- A local angle to a national story. State and local reporters like using a “hook” to illustrate the significance of a national story to their audience.

When planning events and activities, consider the most appealing way to present them to reporters. Think about developing a succinct message or “pitch” — a few words that will convince the media that your story is important and newsworthy.

National service programs were featured in more than 12,000 print news stories in 1996.

Types of Media

Each type of media has unique characteristics. It is important to understand the differences between them when determining which forms are most appropriate for getting your message out.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers provide in-depth coverage of stories and are particularly good for reaching decisionmakers (e.g., the mayor, business leaders, community officials) who are interested in more than the “headline” news found on television and radio. Newspapers include regular news and features, editorials, commentaries, letters to the editor, investigative reports, and opinion columns.

Print reporters spend a great deal of time learning about and explaining complex issues. They appreciate all the documentation, facts, and figures you can provide.

Weekly newspapers are a major source of information for people outside of metropolitan areas. It is generally easier to place stories in these publications, as they focus primarily on local stories. Additionally, college newspapers are usually receptive to stories about local programs.

**There are more
than 11,000
trade publications
in print in the
United States.**

MAGAZINES

Local and regional magazines offer many of the same advantages as newspapers — large staffs, time, and space to devote to your story and a product that can be reprinted. Stories of interest to magazines include profiles of interesting people, trends, or exceptional performance in some area. Except for stories of widespread, national interest, you probably will want to concentrate your efforts on placing stories in regional, state, or city publications.

Articles in special interest publications, or in trade or professional journals, reach specific, key audiences that can be important to your program. These publications cover issues ranging from nature trail restoration to crime studies to new trends in education. You should tailor each story to the specific audience when approaching such publications. And remember that most magazines work with a lead time of several months.

WIRE SERVICES

Wire services, such as the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, and PR Newswire gather news from all across the country — and the world — and provide stories on a continuous basis for other media. Wire service bureaus are typically located in large cities, but they frequently use “stringers” (local reporters) to cover news in smaller cities.

Reuters Daybook and the Associated Press Calendar, published Monday to Friday, carry short accounts of breaking stories and upcoming activities like press conferences, conventions, speeches and hearings. Reporters often use this calendar to determine their story of the day. To get an event listed, submit the information via press release or media advisory at least three to five days in advance to the wire service bureau nearest you — and follow up with a telephone call. Materials should be addressed to the Daybook Editor or Calendar Editor.

TELEVISION

Television provides the greatest media reach, but it is also the toughest sell. There are several opportunities for airing your message:

- Local news programs
- Public affairs programs
- Talk shows
- Editorial comment
- Feature segments
- Public service announcements
- Local cable television shows and public access TV

Watch your local news programs to become familiar with the reporters, their interviewing styles, and the types of stories they care about.

Your message for television must be short and simple. Television news usually reduces complex stories to 30- to 60-second segments. Lengthy explanations usually end up as short “sound bites.”

The assignment editor in a TV news department generally assigns reporters to cover stories one day in advance. Inform the assignment editor and reporters of scheduled events in advance with a media advisory and follow-up call. Calls should be placed before noon. Events held before 1:00 p.m. have the best chance for coverage in that day’s broadcast.

Whenever a TV program airs a piece on your program, be sure you tape it on a VCR. You’ll want a copy to help with future marketing efforts, and outside video services can be very costly. Please send a copy to the Office of Public Affairs immediately after airing — this helps staff track story trends and share good ideas with other national service programs.

RADIO

Radio shares many of the characteristics of television. Most radio stations tailor their programming to a very specific audience (e.g., older adults, minorities, etc.) In recent years, many radio stations have expanded their news coverage to include talk shows and call-in programs on issues of interest to the community. This provides opportunities to match your message to the station’s audience. However, there are many radio stations that don’t carry news at all, so again, it’s important to do some homework.

Please be sure to tape radio shows that feature your program and send a copy to the Office of Public Affairs.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS

Public affairs programming is usually a combination of news and community service-oriented material. It takes many forms on both radio and television:

- Interviews
- Documentaries
- Panel discussions
- Editorial commentaries

Program ideas should be current and geared toward the community at large. For example, you can ask the station to sponsor a community service segment during local news programming, then provide information and national service members to be interviewed.

Developing a Media Plan

Drafting a sound media plan each year will help you prepare for media attention, while conducting proactive media outreach. The plan should be flexible so you can accommodate unforeseen news and should address three basic questions:

WHAT ARE YOUR PUBLIC RELATIONS GOALS?

Determining your goals will enable you to focus your efforts and stay on track.

- Who are your audiences?
- Are you trying to recruit new members?
- Are you trying to increase awareness of your program?
- Are you trying to build private support for your program?

WHAT ARE YOUR RESOURCES?

Determining the resources you have available for media efforts will help you set realistic goals.

- What materials and tools do you already have that will help you carry out a successful media strategy?
- What staff are available to help you carry out your media plan?
- How much time can staff devote to media-related activities?
- What is your estimated budget for media relations?
- Can your partner organizations provide assistance or resources?

WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE?

Determining your time, opportunities, and limitations will enable you to organize and prioritize media plans.

- Are there specific projects you'll be working on at a certain time that you'd like to promote?
- Are there studies or results that will be released at a certain time that you'd like to promote?
- Your timeline should include a plan for participating in events that all national service programs take part in — such as Opening Day, Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King Day, National Volunteer Week, and graduation/closing ceremonies.

Once you have determined your goals, opportunities, and limitations, you can set a strategy and adhere to a timeline. For example, your goal may be to publicize the accomplishments of a particular project. Your strategy identifies who will be interested in the story, which media outlets reach these groups, and how you will sell or “pitch” the story. Next, you should develop a timetable to address factors such as timeliness of the story and media deadlines.

Getting Information to the Media

The first step in getting your information to the appropriate media outlet is to develop and maintain a comprehensive, up-to-date press list. If you're in a large community or city, you may want to check your library for media directories, such as the *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* or *Bacon's Publicity Checker*. Your state office, commission, or partner organizations may be able to provide you with a good press list.

DEVELOPING A MEDIA LIST

Your list should include:

- Wire services (e.g., Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters)
- Local and regional newspapers (both daily and weekly)
- Regional magazines
- Local television news and talk shows
- Local radio news and talk shows
- Local cable TV stations
- Special interest media, such as:
 - ethnic publications and radio stations
 - college newspapers and radio stations
 - community newspapers and calendars
 - church bulletins
 - corporate newsletters

For each of these outlets, your list should include the name, title, address, e-mail address, phone number, and fax number of key reporters and editors. Many newspapers have “beat reporters” that cover certain topics such as education, crime, health, etc. Some have established a separate staff for online versions – and they have an even greater demand for stories to cover. The best way to ensure that your list is accurate is to call the outlet to obtain or confirm the names of the reporters and editors who are important to you. If possible, you should update your list every three months, as there is staff turnover at media outlets.

In most cases, the assignment editor decides what is “news” — filtering all the potential news stories (advisories, releases, letters, memos, and wire service reports) each day and deciding which reporters will cover what events. For each media outlet, when possible, your list should include the names of the following people:

- Assignment editor
- Reporter
- City editor or news director
- Bureau chief
- Daybook or daily calendar editor
- Editorial page editor

Ideas for newsworthy national service stories

- Invite reporters to cover your swearing-in ceremony — talk about goals.
- Announce significant program achievements.
- Announce new private sector partnerships and alliances with other service projects.
- Give an award to a national service member or supportive community partner.
- Report your accomplishments at local town council meetings.
- Develop feature and human interest stories (e.g., articles about particularly dedicated and effective members).
- Living/lifestyle or community editor
- Features editor
- Public service director
- Appropriate talk show hosts and producers

There are many ways to communicate your message to the media. These are some of the most common:

PRESS RELEASES

A press release is a succinct account of your story (usually one page) and should be written as a news article, following the “5 Ws and H” format. That is, the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the story. Press releases usually publicize an event or program, announce an upcoming activity or a new initiative, or report relevant news. Newspaper editors often use portions of press releases in their stories. *See page 18 for tips on writing a press release.*

MEDIA ADVISORIES

A media advisory (or press advisory) is a memo to the media alerting them to an upcoming event (i.e. press conferences, awards ceremonies, special events, etc.). Media advisories are written similarly to press releases, but are much shorter and repeat the “5 Ws and H” in an invitation format at the bottom of the release. Advisories should be faxed to reporters about three to five days before your event and followed up with a phone call to confirm their attendance or to offer additional information.

Be sure to include detailed information on where your event is to be held, including directions if necessary.

PITCH LETTERS

When a story is not breaking news — such as a human interest story — writing a compelling letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, or the producer of a TV or radio show, is often the most effective way to summarize the most important aspects of your story and why readers, viewers, or listeners will want to know about it. The letter should be no longer than a page and should be written in clear and convincing language.

Written materials should be faxed to all the media outlets on your press list that may be interested in your story. Although this may mean that three press releases go to the same publication, you are more likely to get coverage when you have the attention of several people at a newspaper or station.

All of the above press communications should be followed up with phone calls to the appropriate reporters and editors.

PRESS CALLS

If you don't have time to put anything in writing, call reporters and editors directly to pitch your story. Be sure to get your main point across quickly and in the most compelling fashion. Reporters do not have time to waste. *See pages 10 and 11 for more information about working with reporters.*

PRESS KITS

A press kit is a set of materials that provides the information a reporter needs to write an accurate article. Press kits can be sent anytime to reporters but they should always be on hand at press conferences and other special events. Among the materials you may choose to include in press kit are:

- Press releases
- Fact sheets
- Program brochures
- Agenda (for an event or press conference)
- Biographical sketches of speakers (for an event or press conference)
- Photos of speakers (for an event or press conference)
- A copy of your latest newsletter
- Any other important program information
- Your business card

PRESS CONFERENCES

Press conferences are held to announce significant news to the media, such as the launching of a new program, an anniversary event, or an innovative partnership. They frequently include VIPs and other speakers. Effective press conferences require careful planning and attention to detail, and can be quite time-consuming. *See page 19 for tips on press conferences.*

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events on Opening Day, Martin Luther King Day, National Day of Service, and Make a Difference Day are not only great occasions to work with other service programs, but also great opportunities to gain media coverage of your program. Encouraging community leaders and other VIPs to participate in these special events will also help attract media attention.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The Internet and the World Wide Web offer opportunities to provide information to reporters on your program. If your program has its own web site, consider developing a section targeted to press – and include press releases, a project summary, an updated “what got done” report, member profiles, and quotes from corporate partners, community leaders, and national service members. Remember to include your Internet e-mail and Web addresses on press releases and other materials.

More ideas for newsworthy stories

- **Celebrate and participate in a well-known day or week (e.g., Martin Luther King Day).**
- **Announce and adapt national reports and surveys locally.**
- **Arrange for a testimonial or guest speaker.**
- **Initiate a new service project.**
- **Tie your story to the news of the day covered by the media.**
- **Celebrate an anniversary or other milestone.**
- **Link up with another publicity event in your community.**

If you don't have your own Web address (or even if you do), you may want to refer reporters to the Corporation for National and Community Service's web site — <http://www.nationalservice.org>

The corporation's web site provides up-to-date information to help the public – and the media – understand the corporation's mission and national service programs. It also gives the media and others interested in national service fast access to information such as press releases, legislative updates, program directories and applications, and newsletters, as well as providing links to other national service web sites. Please provide a hotlink to the corporation's web site – and contact the Office of Public Affairs with your site address so we can reciprocate.

National service programs may encourage members of the press to visit the CNCS web site to:

- better understand the National Senior Service Corps, Learn and Serve America, and AmeriCorps;
- access recent press releases;
- get an in-depth look at national service in action through one of many program profiles; or
- obtain address and phone numbers of national service programs to schedule interviews or site visits.

Working With Reporters

There is no substitute for good relationships with reporters. Read their stories. Get to know them and the media outlet they work for. Give them background information on your program and tell them what you're trying to accomplish. See where their interests lie. Follow up with occasional phone calls to give them story ideas or to let them know what's going on with your program. Establishing an effective relationship will make your work much easier when it comes time to pitch stories you really care about.

Remember that reporters are always looking for stories; they need you almost as much as you need them. Reporting the news is a fast-paced, high-pressure job, and reporters have little time to spare. To successfully work with them, keep in mind that they want:

- The facts;
- Accurate information;
- Quotes — short, colorful comments from a high-profile person in your organization;
- Background information — basic or historical information that will help the reporter understand the significance of your story; and
- An exclusive — being the only reporter to get a story.

Other tips:

- Be responsive — return reporters' calls as soon as possible. Reporters have tight deadlines, and news dies if it is not reported quickly. Know their deadlines.
- Try not to call reporters after noon — they are often pursuing or writing their story for late afternoon deadlines.
- Be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Offer to get back to the reporter with the information at a later time. Respond as quickly as possible.
- Be factual.
- Offer assistance — for example, suggest other credible sources on a story, such as state commission members, state office staff or corporate partners.
- Be realistic — you can't control the news. You can't determine whether a story runs, where or when it will be placed, what the headline, content or tone will be.
- Reporters receive many story ideas a day. Make sure your media advisories and press releases are as compelling as possible.

WHEN TO CONTACT THE MEDIA

Unless there is an important breaking story, try to contact the media well in advance. Begin sending press releases and advisories about two weeks before your event and always follow up with several telephone calls — first to make sure they received your release and then a day or two before your event to remind them about it and to confirm their attendance. When making your press calls, keep the following tips in mind:

- Immediately identify yourself and your organization and why you're calling.
- Keep the call interesting, while maintaining a professional tone. (If you don't emphasize the importance of the event, the assignment editor or reporter isn't likely to cover it.)
- Keep the call short.

Seeking outside help to promote your program

Companies and foundations that partner with national service programs frequently have internal staff or outside consultants for their public relations needs. They may be quite receptive to assisting you in getting press releases out, holding press conferences, and planning other events to help publicize your program. Many even have their own personal contacts with reporters that could be helpful.

Also, local advertising agencies, designers, and printers may be willing to contribute to your program by developing brochures and other materials at a discounted cost or at no cost.

The Offices of Public Affairs and Public Liaison can assist you with media, signs, and materials.

Getting Your Message Out Through Interviews

Giving interviews is a great way to get your message out. It allows the public to hear information directly from you.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Learn all you can about the media organization that is requesting the interview. Are they affiliated with a network? How many media markets are they in? What is their focus (if there is one)? Have they covered your program or other national service programs in the past?

Establish your objectives and decide what you hope to gain by giving the interview. Determine who your audience will be. If there is nothing to be gained, you may decide not to do an interview. However, *think very carefully* before declining an interview if one is requested.

Provide the interviewer with as much background information as possible about your program and national service. The more familiar the interviewer becomes with your program, the more informed his or her questions will be.

Ask the interviewer what the general direction of the interview will be. What is the topic? You may offer suggestions for subjects you would like to discuss. However, it is up to the interviewer to decide what he or she will ask you.

If you're giving an interview that will be broadcast, always be sure to arrange for someone to tape your interview. If this is not possible, ask the interviewer before the show for a copy. You will learn a lot from watching yourself and listening to yourself, and it's a good source of information about your program. Also, be sure to send a copy to the Office of Public Affairs.

YOUR RIGHTS IN AN INTERVIEW

Remember that you are not being forced to participate in any interview. You are doing it by choice, and there is no reason to feel intimidated. No matter how well-informed the interviewer may be, you should remember that you know more about your program than he or she possibly can. You should feel confident with your knowledge.

You do not have to answer questions of a personal and confidential nature. But you should tell the interviewer why you cannot respond. Just say something like, "I'm sorry, but that's a personal question" or "I'm sorry, that is a legal matter and I can't discuss it." Don't say "no comment" – to most people, "no comment" conveys a sense that you're hiding something.

Note: This section is excerpted with permission from material produced by Michael Sheehan Associates, Inc., 1993.

BASIC INTERVIEW STRATEGY

Be yourself! Don't attempt to change your style. In an interview situation, genuine warmth and enthusiasm communicate well.

Don't say something you wouldn't want to see in print or hear played back. *There is no such thing as "off the record" or "speaking for myself."* If you have the slightest doubt, leave it out.

When you or your staff are being interviewed as a representative of your program, you are never speaking for yourself, so don't fall into the trap of giving your personal opinion. Any remarks you or your staff make will be attributed to your program no matter how you qualify your answer.

If you disagree with anything the interviewer says, let him or her know immediately. If you let a misleading or false statement slip by, the assumption may be that you agree with what was said.

Do not become defensive, even if an interviewer is rude or hostile. You can never win by getting into an argument.

These are cues to watch for if you are unsure of an interviewer's motives:

- If an interviewer constantly interrupts your answers, allow him or her to finish asking the questions and then inform him or her that you will address those questions shortly. Then continue what you were saying. A good way to lead off is with the statement, "As I was saying..." Another tactic is to ignore the interruption, finish what you were saying and then ask the interviewer to repeat the question.
- If the interviewer asks you a question and then gives you a choice of two answers, you don't have to choose between those two. If neither answer seems appropriate, just say, "I don't think either of those statements really answers the question correctly. My answer to that question is..."
- If the interviewer gets off the subject and onto one you think is irrelevant to your objectives, you should steer the interview back on track. To do this, say something like, "I think we may be getting a little off track right now. What I think is more relevant is the fact that..." At this point you should bridge back to one of your main objectives.
- If an interviewer fires a number of questions at you without letting you answer any of them completely, politely say that you would like to answer each question in an orderly fashion. Then choose whichever question with which you feel most comfortable.

"On the record" or "off the record"?

Some reporters may ask you to supply information "off the record" — which means the information will not be printed or broadcast. It is best to assume that all information you give a reporter is "on the record" — which means it can be printed, broadcast and attributed to you. Be prepared to see anything you say to a reporter in a newspaper or on a radio or TV news show.

It's perfectly all right, even on TV, to bring notes with you. But these should be just that, notes and not a script. Notes are especially helpful when you are quoting statistics or other technical information. Make sure the notes you bring look neat. You don't want to be shuffling through loose papers and looking disorganized. If you bring notes with you on a radio show, make sure to unclip your notes before the show starts and lay them out in a way so that you do not have to lift or sift through them. The sound of shuffling papers is picked up very easily by high-powered microphones.

FOLLOWING UP

It's very important to send a thank-you note to the host of the show, the producer, and the general manager. In your note, you should not only express your gratitude for being on the show, but you should also offer yourself as a future resource. If possible, include ideas for future interview segments. Also report on any positive feedback you received from those who saw or heard the show.

It's also a good idea to keep a written record of your experience with a contact sheet complete with names and phone numbers, which can be updated regularly. This will be handy the next time you want to get air time.

Communicating Through Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are short messages that radio and television stations air free of charge on behalf of the public interest. These messages must contain information beneficial to the community and cannot include controversial material. PSAs are a great vehicle to communicate upcoming community events, recruitment needs, service opportunities, and other information beneficial to the community.

WRITING STYLE

When writing a PSA, remember that broadcast copy is written and designed for the ear. Keep in mind that broadcast copy should:

- sound personal and have a sense of immediacy;
- be clear, concise, conversational, and correct;
- use the active voice and present tense whenever possible;
- use contractions just as you would if you were talking; and
- include information about how listeners (viewers) can obtain more information.

Your message should be easy to understand the first time it is heard. One way to test your copy for conversational tone is to read it aloud to someone else. Make sure there are no words that are hard to pronounce. Keep in mind that it may be an announcer reading your PSA and not you. Also, be sure it contains accurate facts, dates and names.

LENGTH

Be sure to fit your message in the time slot allotted.

10 seconds – about 25 words

30 seconds – about 75 words

60 seconds – about 150 words

GETTING YOUR PSA PLACED

To find out more about placing PSAs, contact the public service directors at the television and radio stations serving your area. Meet with them personally to find out their PSA requirements (preferred length and format). Be sure to stress why your announcement is important to the community. Some stations may even be willing to help produce PSAs for your organization!

The Office of Public Affairs produces print, radio, and television public service announcements for national distribution. You may request these products and localize them for use in your community.

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Tips on Writing a Press Release

A press release needs to follow strict editorial guidelines. A release should follow the “inverted pyramid” format news stories are written in, with the most important information first. The inverted pyramid allows editors to easily cut the story to fit available space without losing important facts.

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

The top of the pyramid – the first paragraph – is the lead. It generally answers the “five Ws and H” — who, what, when, where, why, and how. The lead must be written to grab reporters’ and editors’ attention immediately.

The second paragraph is called the “bridge” and provides transition from the lead to the more detailed information to follow. It may explain any “whys” and “hows” not included in the lead.

The third and last part of the pyramid is the “body.” The information given in the lead should be explained in the body. It should include interesting and significant details that pertain to the story. Quotes from relevant people can be included here. Remember, the facts in your body – as in the entire release – are presented in diminishing order of importance.

FORMAT

Formatting a press release will help ensure it gets read – and used. The following information should be at the top of your release:

- contact name, telephone number, and e-mail and web site addresses for your organization in bold type;
- the date for the story’s release (usually the day you send it out); and
- a short headline that serves as the “hook” for your story.

Releases should:

- be no longer than one page, if possible;
- be single-spaced;
- avoid using jargon and technical terms, or explain them if they must be used;
- include a paragraph that defines national service;
- use quotes from relevant people; and
- be printed on your organization’s letterhead.

When there is more than one page, type the word “MORE” at the bottom of the page and at the end of your release, type “END” or the marks “###”.

The *A.P. Stylebook* (available at local bookstores) provides useful details on punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and titles that are acceptable to most media.

Always remember to check carefully for spelling errors!

Tips on Press Conferences

Press conferences should be held only if you have major news to announce. Many organizations go years without holding one, and some will never hold one. A press conference may be appropriate if, for example, your organization:

- forms a task force or partnership to meet a significant problem or need;
- launches a new project;
- begins a significant new service; or
- releases year-end accomplishments.

TIMING

To notify the media, send a press advisory to each individual on your media list three to five days before the event. Follow-up phone calls should be made to those reporters you most want to attend. For maximum coverage, schedule the conference in the morning. This will allow reporters time to do follow-up work after the event ends. Your press conference shouldn't run more than a half hour.

LOGISTICS

Here are some logistical suggestions to help ensure a successful conference:

- Select a convenient location for the press conference, such as a local project site or a centrally located meeting room. (If the site is outside, have an alternative rain site planned.)
- Choose a site large enough to accommodate the media, guests, cameras and other equipment.
- Make sure there are plenty of three-pronged electrical outlets for reporters' equipment (lights, recorders, cameras) and a riser in the back of the room for TV cameras.
- Provide a lectern that can hold several microphones or one microphone that feeds sound to a multiple port box that crews can plug their equipment into.
- Display your program logo in a prominent spot (on the front of the podium and behind the speakers).
- Plan a minute-by-minute logistics sheet that includes speaking order, arrival and departure times of special guests, and last-minute items.
- Reserve the front row for media. Provide chairs for reporters, name cards for speakers, and an easel for visual aids. When appropriate, use visual aids such as colorful charts and graphs – with smaller copies in the press kits.
- Provide a media sign-in sheet so you'll know which reporters attended in order to follow up with them.
- Conduct a question-and-answer session after the statement or conference.
- Select one person to greet the press and escort them around the site, if needed.
- Take plenty of photographs – black and white as well as color. Also, when possible, record the press conference on audio or videotape.

Press kits should be handed out to reporters attending the press conference and delivered afterwards to those who could not attend. Press kits should include copies of speakers' statements, a media advisory or press release on the conference, and biographical information and photos of the speakers, if available.

Corporation for National and Community Service

National service is a movement that provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to help solve community problems through service. Local and national nonprofit organizations sponsor service projects and set objectives to respond to the needs of the communities they serve. The Corporation for National and Community Service provides resources, oversight, and evaluation for AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps.

AmeriCorps



AmeriCorps engages 50,000 citizens in a year of full-time, results-driven service sponsored by hundreds of local and national nonprofits. In return, AmeriCorps members earn education awards that help pay for college or pay back student loans. AmeriCorps members help communities meet critical challenges in the areas of education, public safety, human needs, and the environment.

Learn and Serve America



Learn and Serve America engages students from kindergarten through college in community projects that integrate service and learning. Learn and Serve America builds on the grass-roots service-learning movement by promoting service as a learning opportunity and providing models and resources to schools, universities, and community groups. Students use academic skills to solve real-world problems and learn the value of service, citizenship, and responsibility.

National Senior Service Corps



The National Senior Service Corps involves a half million Americans age 55 and older in results-driven service as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The Senior Corps taps the vast wealth of experience, skills, and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges.

For more information:

Visit the national service web site at <http://www.nationalservice.org> or call one of the following numbers:

AmeriCorps: 1-800-942-2677

Learn and Serve America: (202) 606-5000

Senior Corps: 1-800-424-8867



A m e r i C o r p s

AmeriCorps is a network of programs operated by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

AmeriCorps engages 50,000 citizens in a year of full-time, results-driven service sponsored by local and national nonprofits. In return, AmeriCorps members earn education awards that help pay for college or pay back student loans. AmeriCorps members help communities meet critical challenges in the areas of education, public safety, human needs, and the environment.

The National Service Network

AmeriCorps sponsors include national, state, and local nonprofit organizations all across the nation. In order to meet the specific needs of their communities, programs recruit and train individuals who are willing to devote at least a year of service. In addition to the hundreds of community programs in which AmeriCorps members serve, there are two national programs operated by the Corporation for National and Community Service:

AmeriCorps*VISTA has served America's economically challenged communities for more than thirty years. Members increase the capability of people to improve the conditions of their own lives through employment training, literacy programs, housing assistance, health education, entrepreneurship, and neighborhood revitalization. All members of AmeriCorps*VISTA live in the communities they serve.

AmeriCorps*NCCC (the National Civilian Community Corps) is a ten-month, full-time residential service and leadership program for men and women age 18 to 24. Members

meet education, public safety, and other needs, with a special focus on the environment. AmeriCorps*NCCC combines civilian service with the ethic of military service, including leadership and team building. AmeriCorps*NCCC campuses are located in Sacramento, Calif.; Denver, Colo.; Charleston, S.C.; Perryville, Md.; and Washington, D.C.

National Service Programs

AmeriCorps is part of a national service network that includes Learn and Serve America, which integrates service and learning for students from kindergarten through college, and the National Senior Service Corps, which involves Americans age 55 and older in service as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

For more information:

For a listing of AmeriCorps programs and an application, call 1-800-942-2677 (TDD 1-800-833-3722). You can also visit the AmeriCorps web site at <http://www.americorps.org/nccc/>



Learn and Serve America

Learn and Serve America is a network of programs operated by the Corporation for National Service.

Learn and Serve America engages students from kindergarten through college in community projects that integrate service and learning. Learn and Serve America builds on the grassroots service-learning movement by promoting service as a learning opportunity and providing models and resources to schools, universities, and community groups. Students use academic skills to solve real-world problems and learn the value of service, citizenship, and responsibility.

In Learn and Serve America's **School-Based Programs**, schools plan, implement, and expand service activities for elementary and secondary students. Schools also use Learn and Serve America grants for adult volunteer programs and teacher training. Programs are administered by state education agencies, Indian tribes, U.S. territories, and nonprofit organizations.

In Learn and Serve America's **Community-Based Programs**, state offices and nonprofit organizations implement, expand, and replicate service-learning programs in local communities. Participants are between the ages of 5 and 17 and include students and youth who are not in school.

In Learn and Serve America's **Higher Education** programs, colleges and universities help create and strengthen community service and service-learning initiatives. A wide array of students and organizations work together to address community needs. Grants also support technical assistance for expanding the field of service-learning.

National Service Programs

Learn and Serve America is part of the service network that includes AmeriCorps, which engages 25,000 citizens in a year of full-time service in exchange for education awards that help pay for college or pay back student loans, and the National Senior Service Corps, which engages Americans age 55 and older in service as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

For more information:

For information about Learn and Serve programs, contact Learn and Serve at (202) 606-5000 or <http://www.cns.gov>



National Senior Service Corps

Senior Corps is a network of programs operated by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The National Senior Service Corps engages a half million Americans age 55 and older in results-driven service as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The Senior Corps taps the vast wealth of experience, skills, and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

RSVP is one of the largest volunteer efforts in the nation – matching programs that need to be solved with people age 55 and older who are willing to help. Volunteers organize neighborhood watch programs, tutor teenagers, renovate homes, teach English to immigrants, assist victims of natural disasters, and whatever else their skills and interests lead them to do.

Foster Grandparent Program

Foster Grandparents serve as extended family members to nearly 80,000 children and youth with exceptional needs. Foster Grandparents serve in schools, hospitals, correctional institutions, day care centers, and Head Start centers. They help children who have been abused or neglected, mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers, and care for premature infants or children with physical disabilities.

Senior Companion Program

Senior Companions provide assistance and friendship to seniors who have difficulty with daily living tasks – helping them live

independently in their homes instead of moving to more costly institutional care. They usually serve two to four clients during their 20 hours of weekly service. Senior Companions receive monthly training in various medical topics – and alert doctors and family members of potential health problems.

National Service Programs

The Senior Corps is part of a national service network that includes AmeriCorps, which engages 25,000 citizens in a year of full-time service in exchange for education awards that help pay for college or pay back student loans, and Learn and Serve America, which integrates service and learning for students from kindergarten through college.

For more information:

To learn more about Senior Corps programs, opportunities to participate in the programs, and ways to support the programs, contact the Senior Corps at 1-800-424-8867 (TDD 1-800-833-3722) or <http://www.nationalservice.org>

Public Service Announcement

Starkville Literacy Program
123 State Street
Starkville, MS 12345

Start Using: Upon Receipt
Stop Using: June 1, 2002

CONTACT: Jane Smith
(555)555-5555

sample

- 20 seconds -

AmeriCorps is getting things done.

In Starkville, AmeriCorps is increasing the literacy rate
by tutoring children and teaching adults how to read.

If you're over the age of 18, you can become an
AmeriCorps Member and

Do service for your community.

Earn money for college.

Get experience for life.

Call 555-5555.

NEWS ADVISORY
January 1, 2001

CONTACT: Jill Smith
(000)000-0000

MAYOR POWELL TO VISIT LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA PROJECT Powell Joins School Superintendent Washington in Honoring Students

Mayor Abbey Powell and Superintendent Ransom Washington will visit Abraham Lincoln Middle School's Learn and Serve K-12 program on Wednesday, Jan. 8 at 10 a.m. The Mayor and Superintendent will congratulate the program's student volunteers on their highly successful efforts in beautifying the surrounding neighborhood in Appletown.

The mayor will present Lincoln's principal, Jacqueline Aker, with a certificate commending the students' accomplishments and will tour the local area to survey the project sites.

Since the program's inception in September, Lincoln students have removed graffiti, cleaned up parks, and planted trees throughout the area. The seventh- and eighth-graders are a part of Learn and Serve America, a national program that engages students in service-learning, a teaching method that integrates community service into classroom curriculum.

National service is a movement that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to help solve community problems. In addition to Learn and Serve America, which involves students from kindergarten through college in community projects that integrate service and education, the Corporation for National and Community Service also oversees AmeriCorps and the National Senior Service Corps.

Press is invited to cover the event.

WHO: Mayor Abbey Powell
Superintendent Ransom Washington
Principal and students of Abraham Lincoln Middle School

WHAT: Presentation of certificate to Learn and Serve America students

WHY: To commend the students for their community service efforts

WHERE: Lincoln Middle School
123 Main Street, Appletown

WHEN: Wednesday, Jan. 3 at 10 a.m.

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sample

sample

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 1, 2001

CONTACT: Sandy Scott
(123)123-4567

**SENIOR CORPS TUTORS IN CLEVELAND SERVE AS MODEL
FOR “AMERICA READS” INITIATIVE**

CLEVELAND -- The success of 20 Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) members who tutor children at East Elementary School has made their program a national model for the “America Reads” initiative. The goal of “America Reads” is to ensure that all children can read independently by the time they complete third grade.

The RSVP volunteers worked twice a week with first-graders over the past year and helped the children raise their reading levels by 20 percent.

“The President has challenged Senior Corps volunteers to take a major role in the ‘America Reads’ drive to provide a million tutors and build young children’s reading skills. Our program will be a model for similar efforts around the country,” said RSVP Director Joanne Newsome.

“The children are excited about reading and look forward to seeing their tutors. The volunteers are equally excited about helping the children and are very proud of their improved reading scores. It shows that senior service can make a tremendous difference in children’s lives.”

National service is a movement that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to help solve community problems. In addition to the Senior Corps — which involves a half million Americans age 55 and over as Foster Grandparents to troubled children and youth, Senior Companions to the homebound elderly, and RSVP volunteers in a myriad of community projects — the Corporation for National and Community Service also oversees AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America.

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Corporation for National and Community Service
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